

## Chapter 9

### The Qur'an: Call for Jihad

#### The Prophet Mohammad

(c. 650)

#### Introduction

Exiled from their home city of Mecca, Mohammed and the first Muslims found sanctuary in Medina in 622. Determined to get revenge, Mohammed and his supporters led a series of raids to disrupt caravan trade to Mecca. These raids gradually escalated into full-scale warfare between the two cities that ended in Muslim conquest of Mecca in 630. Muhammad died two years later with his religion firmly established in Arabia. The call for jihad, rather than being interpreted as "holy war," more accurately refers to using this traditional practice of raiding enemies to defend the new faith. The late seventh and early eighth centuries saw tremendous expansion for Islam. Arab armies built an incredible empire out of the ruins of the southern and eastern Roman world and extended their boundaries farther east than the Romans ever did. This expansion added thousands to the ranks of Muslim faithful, but generally not through forced conversion.

#### Questions to Consider

- According to the Qur'an, what conditions justify the use of force to defend the faith? What restrictions apply?
- How does this selection fit into a broader discussion of the connections between religious and military expansion during the early medieval period?

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Fight in the path of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress, for God does not love transgressors.

Kill them wherever you encounter them, and expel them from whence they have expelled you, for dissension [fitna] is worse than killing. But do not fight them by the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you first, and if they do fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the unbelievers.

But if they desist, then God is forgiving and merciful.

Fight them until there is no more dissension, and religion is God's. If they desist, there is no enmity, save against the unjust.

When you meet those who are infidels, strike their necks until you have overwhelmed them, tighten their bonds, and then release them, either freely or for ransom, when war lays down its burdens. Thus it is, and if God wished, He would crush them Himself, but He tests you against one another. Those who are killed in the path of God, He does not let their good deeds go for nothing.